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Memoirs with Special Reference to Secession and the Civil War.

By JOHN H. REAGAN, LL.D. Edited by WALTER FLAVIUS McCaleb, Ph.D., with Introduction by Professor GEORGE P. GARRISON. (New York and Washington: The Neale Publishing Company. 1906. Pp. 351.)

JOHN H. REAGAN, "a self-made man", who rose to high rank under the *ancien régime* in the South and who was a trusted adviser to Jefferson Davis, evidently experienced much that would not only interest the present generation, but add to the sum of our historical knowledge. Besides having passed through such crises as Texas annexation, the Mexican War, the compromise of 1850, and the Civil War, Reagan was a man of unusually clear vision, of absolute honesty and few abiding prejudices. He was, then, a man who ought to have written his memoirs; and there was double incentive in his own case because he was for a long time the last living member of the Confederate cabinet, and he realized the ever-growing interest in the events of the war.

But the book itself is short, embracing but three hundred and fifty pages of not very compact print. The main topics treated are the writer's early life in Texas, his part in Congress during three or four years prior to 1861, the organization of the Confederacy at Montgomery, the Civil War, as viewed by an active and efficient cabinet officer in Richmond, and the problems of reconstruction. The most interesting portion of the book is the plain, unvarnished story of Reagan's hardships and early struggles. He does not blush to tell of his experience as an overseer in Mississippi and to note without concern that he thought it a promotion to be raised from the position of teacher to that of overseer. His frank statements about himself lend weight to his opinions about Davis, Lee, and others with whom he later came into daily contact. The fact that such a man could rise to fame in the South and become the trusted companion of the men who made the Confederacy shows how open was the rank of Southern aristocracy.

Reagan defends Davis against Joseph E. Johnston, Beauregard, and Alexander Stephens, and takes the ground that no better or abler leader could have been found. If there are men who still regard the Confederate President as having been tyrannical, unfeeling toward his own people, and cruel to Northern prisoners, they will have to stiffen their backs a little after reading Reagan's account of the cabinet meeting in which the policy of retaliation for Dahlgren's raid was discussed. The cabinet was unanimously in favor of ordering a number of Federal prisoners shot. Davis declined to act on this advice, saying that he opposed shooting unarmed men on any consideration, that the place for such work was on the field of battle (p. 182).

But Reagan's best service to the people of Texas and indirectly to the South was his brave efforts to persuade them, from his cell in

Fort Warren in August, 1865, to accept the results of the war without resistance and meet conservative opinion in the North half-way on the subject of negro enfranchisement. To do this he ran the risk of being declared "reconstructed" and of losing his wide popularity. He took the stand, however, in what was known as his Fort Warren letter, that the better class of negroes should be permitted to vote, that ignorant and propertyless whites and blacks should alike be disfranchised, and that the Southern states should co-operate cordially with President Johnson in re-establishing federal relations. This letter brought to its author unlimited abuse, and for a time every politician considered it his especial duty to malign and ridicule the former Samson whose locks had been shorn by the modern Delilah. Ere ten years elapsed the Fort Warren prisoner was seen to have been the best counsellor of his time.

The last hundred pages of the *Memoirs* consist of appendixes giving reprints of Reagan's more important speeches in Congress and his invaluable public letters of 1865 and 1866. The editing of the work has been very well done.

While this book tells us a great deal that deserved to be recorded and confirms much that was not quite certain without this evidence, it does not give all or even most of the real experience of its author. The most difficult thing in the world for a writer of memoirs is to forget himself and tell truths in the interest of history that might pain people whom he loves. For the noble reticence of great men on subjects of this kind the world may be thankful and historians possibly not unthankful. In this respect Reagan is like most of his predecessors; and some very interesting things which he alone knew are buried with him.

WILLIAM E. DODD.

History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 to the Final Restoration of Home Rule at the South in 1877. By JAMES FORD RHODES, LL.D., Litt.D. Volume VI., 1866-1872; Volume VII., 1872-1877. (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: Macmillan and Company. 1906. Pp. xx, 440; xiii, 431.)

To the ten years following 1866 Mr. Rhodes has given two volumes. Neither of these, however, is much more than two-thirds the length of their immediate predecessor, the bulky volume V. One cannot help wondering, therefore, why chapter 30, introducing Reconstruction, was put in that volume, which was already quite long enough, and which would so much more naturally have ended with the end of the Civil War. In the recasting which the entire work will doubtless have some day, one of the changes should be the transfer of that chapter to volume VI. Volume VI. could then spare some of its matter to volume VII., which, even with the long general index, is shorter than the average.